FY 2000 Subsistence Fisheries Project Narrative
Project #20

Project Title: Kotzebue Winter Subsistence Sheefish Harvest

Investigator Organizations: ADF&G Sport Fisheries and Subsistence Divisions with local hires
Geographic Area: Arctic/Kotzebue/Norton Sound
Information Type: Harvest Monitoring

Issue Addressed: Sheefish are a very important subsistence resource in the Kotzebue area. Harvests are estimated for the Kobuk River villages and the sport fishery, but harvest in the winter under ice gill net fishery, which takes the largest number of fish of any of these fisheries, is not currently known.

Study Objectives:

1. To obtain a complete census of the harvest of sheefish in the under ice subsistence gill net fishery in Hotham Inlet near Kotzebue and
2. To estimate size and age composition of the harvest.

Project Description: This fishery usually takes place from November through February. With the assistance of ADFG-Subsistence Division, all subsistence gill net fishers would be contacted during September and October, prior to the beginning of the fishery. Their cooperation would be established and their participation ensured by contracting their services to keep catch records. A technician based in Kotzebue, trained by staff from the Subsistence Division, would make periodic visits to the fishers to collect and update catch information and to ensure accurate data collection. A complete census of the catch would be obtained in this manner. The technician would also sample fish to determine their length and age and assist in the collection of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) about spawning areas, populations and changes over time. The project leader would read scales and calculate estimates of age and size composition of the catch and write a report of the study findings. This project will be designed, planned, reviewed and executed according to the Sport Fish Division's operational planning process (see *Fisheries* 18(2):6-12).

Consultations Completed/Potential for Capacity Building: Contact with participants prior to the study, and contracting with fishers will enhance cooperation and capacity development while achieving biological study objectives. Local knowledge of abundance trends over time as indicated by fishery participants' recollection of past catches would provide insight into the condition of the sheefish population. The National Park Service in Kotzebue and Nome have consulted on the development of this project and support its implementation. Victor Karmun, with the Northwest Arctic Borough, Coastal Zone Management office was very supportive of this project. Willie Goodwin Northwest Arctic RAC chair, and Enoch Shiedt, Subsistence Specialist for Maniilaq Corp. were contacted by Ken Adkisson (NPS). Both were very supportive of this project. In addition, Randy Meyers, BLM in Kotzebue and Leslie Kerr, Selawik NWR were both contacted and interested in the project

Deliverables / Products: A completion report documenting harvest in numbers of sheefish, and estimates of the size and age composition of the harvest would be written by June 2001 for the ADFG-SF report series. Although this project would be carried out in FY 2001, planning and initial contact with fishers and equipment purchases would take place during FY 2000.

Costs:

Annual Budget Summary	ADF&G	Local Hires	Total
FY 2000	$15.5 K	$ 3.0 K	$18.5 K
FY 2001	$39.9 K	$11.5 K	$51.4 K
Total	$55.4 K	$14.5 K	$69.9 K

The entire FY2000 budget will fund ADF&G for project planning, equipment purchase, and initial contacts with fishers. The subsequent budget will include $11.5 for a local technician in Kotzebue for data collection. An additional $8.0 will be provided to contract local fishers to keep catch records, and $3.0 to Subsistence Division staff in Kotzebue for technician training and initial contact with fishers. In addition, a snow machine for use in the project may be purchased locally. The remainder will provide for ADFG for data analysis and project supervision, including A portion of this will be for biometric support.